DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 426 CS 211 944

AUTHOR Griffin, Jeffrey L.
TITLE Effects of Israeli Press Restrictions on Coverage of the Palestinian Uprising and on U.S. Public Opinion.
PUB DATE Aug 89
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (72nd, Washington, DC, August 10-13, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Censorship; Content Analysis; Foreign Countries; *Mass Media Effects; Mass Media Role; Media Research; *News Reporting; Political Attitudes; *Public Opinion; *Television
IDENTIFIERS Israel; *Media Coverage; Media Government Relationship; *Palestinian Israeli Conflict

ABSTRACT

Comparing United States television news coverage of the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories before and after press restrictions were introduced in March 1988, a study examined whether Israel's press clampdown (restricting particularly the activities of camera crews, and apparently begun in response to negative foreign opinion about Israeli handling of the uprising) successfully reduced the flow of negative news and improved Israel's global image. Content analysis of the evening news broadcast on the three major U.S. television networks from December 1987 through June 1988 revealed, among other things, that in the post-clampdown period there was a sharp decline in the number of stories per month, the length of stories, the number of on-camera sources in the reports, and the production of stories using film footage to accompany reports. Public opinion trend data indicated that, in the period after the press restrictions, Americans had softened their opinion about Israeli tactics in curbing the rebellion--thus indicating that governments beset by internal strife can effectively use press sanctions to reduce the flow of bad news, and ultimately, to sway foreign public opinion. (Six tables of data are included and 18 references are attached. Two appendixes--the coding sheet for television coverage and a list of definitions of source categories--conclude the study.) (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED309426

"Markham Competition"

EFFECTS OF ISRAELI PRESS RESTRICTIONS ON COVERAGE OF THE PALESTINIAN UPRISING AND ON U.S. PUBLIC OPINION

BY

Jeffrey L. Griffin

School of Journalism
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
CB# 3365, Howell Hall
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27599-3365
PH: (919) 962-1204.

Presented to the International Communication Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1989.

CS211844

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jeffrey L. Griffin
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

ABSTRACT

Effects of Israeli Press Restrictions on Coverage of the Palestinian Uprising and on U.S. Public Opinion

By

Jeffrey L. Griffin
School of Journalism
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
CB#3365, Howell Hall
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27599-3365.
PH: (919) 962-1204

After several months of intense media coverage of the Palestinian uprising, in March 1988 Israel began restricting the freedom of the press in reporting on the violence in the occupied territories. The press clampdown, which in particular hampered camera crews, seemed to be a response to negative foreign public opinion about the Israeli handling of the uprising.

This study addressed the question of whether Israel could successfully reduce the flow of negative news in order to improve its global image. A content analysis of the evening news on the three major U.S. television networks found, among other things, that in the post-clampdown period there was a sharp decline in the number of stories per month, the length of stories, the number of on-camera sources in the reports and the proportion of stories using film footage to accompany reports.

Public opinion trend data was examined to see if attitudes toward Israel changed in the period after the press restrictions. Evidence was found that Americans had softened their opinion about Israeli tactics in curbing the rebellion.

ABSTRACT

Effects of Israeli Press Restrictions on Coverage of the Palestinian Uprising and on U.S. Public Opinion

By

Jeffrey L. Griffin
School of Journalism
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
CB#3365, Howell Hall
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27599-3365.
PH: (919) 962-1204

This study compared U.S. television news coverage of the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories before and after press restrictions were introduced in March 1988. Coverage declined in the post-restriction period and some characteristics of coverage changed. At the same time, U.S. public opinion became more sympathetic toward the Israeli handling of the uprising.

EFFECTS OF ISRAELI PRESS RESTRICTIONS ON COVERAGE OF THE PALESTINIAN UPRISING AND ON U.S. PUBLIC OPINION

The power of the global press, particularly television, to focus attention on conflicts between embattled governments and oppressed elements of society seeking more independence has led some nations to curb press freedom. In March 1988 Israel began preventing television camera crews from entering parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where rebelling Palestinians had been waging the civil-disobedience campaign they call the intifada since December 8, 1987. Israel hesitated a long time before taking the step that drew the inevitable camparison to South Africa, whose minority white government censors coverage of unrest.

While authoritarian regimes routinely manacle the press to suit their purposes, the cases of South Africa and Israel must be seen as special because these nations have long been part of the Western tradition that values journalistic freedom. The cases of South Africa and Israel bear remarkable similarity. The Palestinian unrest in Israel, like the black unrest in South Africa, has drawn pervasive media coverage and evoked sympathy worldwide for the plight of those rebelling. Night after night in the initial months of the uprising, the television news carried

video clips of heavily armed soldiers battling rock-throwing youths. The Israelis, like the South Africans before them, have blamed the press for a large measure of their problems, claiming that the presence of the cameras and reporters encourages rioting as the Palestinians try to carry their message into U.S. living rooms. So Israel took a cue from South Africa, whose policy of putting blinders on the foreign press seems to have been effective.

Israel, which has not articulated its restrictions on press coverage by enacting a specific law, nonetheless clamped down on journalists by limiting their access to certain areas. Israel first closed the occupied West Bank to journalists on March 4, 1988, using army roadblocks to keep out the journalists, who are easily identified because they generally drive rented vehicles with Israeli plates and, as a precaution, display signs identifying themselves as foreign press. On March 19, the Israeli army rounded up journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, read them an order declaring the immediate area to be a closed military zone, and threatened them with arrest if found in the area again. No new press policy was announced.

The actions by the South African and Israeli governments raise an important question: by turning the valve to reduce the flow of negative information, can nations engineer their disappearance from the global public agenda? To put it another way, in the public mind, does the violence abate once it is no longer reported? Can the thumbscrew of foreign public opinion be loosened by keeping domestic unrest off the television screens and front pages?

In this study, through a content analysis of the evening newscasts of the three major U.S. networks, the effects of the Israeli press

restrictions on television coverage of the intifada are examined. The question of whether American attitudes toward Israel and its handling of the Palestinian uprising changed in response to any changes in coverage also is addressed.

In the case of South Africa, where press restrictions have reduced the amount of fresh video footage, studies have shown a decline in coverage. The Israeli government gambled that the strategy would work for it also.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A *Chicago Sun-Times* survey (Fitzgerald, 1985) found a decline in U.S. newspaper coverage of South Africa in the wake of the Nov. 2, 1985, sanctions that severely limited press access, even though the restrictions struck hardest at broadcast journalists. Television crews, photographers and radio reporters were prohibited from covering unrest in 38 areas of South Africa being governed under emergency laws and were forbidden to obtain film, recordings or videotapes from others in emergency areas. The restrictions required print journalists to check in with local police before entering areas of unrest and to agree to follow police instructions. The rules forbid coverage of police and military actions in emergency areas or coverage of protesters' activities.

The *Sun-Times* found that, although print journalists faced looser restrictions, coverage of anti-apartheid violence declined over the three weeks after the press curbs as compared to the three weeks preceding the decrees. The survey noted that coverage, measured in terms of total

column inches, fell, although the violence did not diminish. Of the four newspapers analyzed -- the *Christian Science Monitor*, *The New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Sun-Times* -- coverage dropped most significantly in the *Christian Science Monitor*, which is highly regarded for its foreign coverage. According to the survey, the *Monitor* devoted 144.5 column inches to the South African situation in the three weeks before the press curbs and just 81.5 in the three weeks after.

Broadcast news organizations protested that the press restrictions, which were further tightened in June 1986, caused not only a cutback in coverage, but severely hurt the quality of the stories. Cable News Network acknowledged that it was forced to resort to verbal presentations because it could not obtain video footage to visually present the story. A CBS deputy foreign editor bemoaned the fact that the restrictions were hurting the quality of stories because they forced the network to rely on witnesses, rather than its own news crews. ABC News anchor Peter Jennings has suggested that reducing the visual coverage of conflict has dire repercussions in how a story is perceived:

> The South African government, I can tell you, really knows what it is doing. If you prevent the media from taking pictures of the violence . . . then the violence will plummet from the front pages and the television screens of America. The violence won't stop, of course, but America's interest and perhaps even its conscience, it seems to me, has already been dulled as a result of the Draconian censorship . . . And if there is no daily story to fire the imagination, then the general struggle in South Africa will not be on the popular agenda.[1]

---

[1]Jennings, Peter. "The 1986 Joe Alex Morris Jr. Memorial Lecture," *Nieman Reports*, Summer 1988, p. 7.

Jennings' comment reflects the wide currency with which journalists and media researchers hold the agenda-setting function of the press. In a classic exploration of the consequences of the way the press defines and performs its job and how its output is assimilated by policy-makers, Cohen (1963) first put into words the concept that gave birth to the body of research on agenda-setting: "It (the press) may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." [2]

In a more recent study supporting the notion that the media can influence people's perceptions of what is important, Gurevitch and Levy (1986) suggested that the media play an important role in frame construction. Gurevitch and Levy examined the role of media "metamessages" in orienting the audience to the social world. Metamessages were defined as those latent meanings embedded in the audience decodings of mass media messages that link the aggregated structure of individually created meanings to macrosocial phenomena. They found that with event-oriented issues, which were those focused on a specific incident or event, viewer understanding of those issues seemed to be governed by "the latent framework implicit in the news." Gurevitch and Levy said these frameworks or contexts are constructed, at least partly, through cumulative exposure to the "dominant meanings" projected by the media.

The research of Gurevitch and Levy would suggest that nightly television coverage, replete with gripping visual footage of Israeli soldiers firing on rock-throwing youths or beating protesters, would send

[2]Cohen, Bernard C. *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 13.

a message to viewers that the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories is intolerable and that Israelis are brutally repressive. On the other hand, if coverage declined, and if these images became fewer and farther between, the "metamessage" might be perceived that the situation was no longer critical.

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) found strong evidence that television news can be instrumental in shaping public attitudes. They found that television news has a "priming" effect through its calling attention to some matters while ignoring others. Through priming, they argued, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies or candidates for public office are judged. According to Iyengar and Kinder, television news helps determine these standards that citizens use in making such judgments through what stories it chooses to cover, and thus, what considerations are made available for evaluation.

So far, however, researchers have not provided much evidence that the press clampdown in South Africa has caused people to lose interest in that story. Singer and Ludwig (1987) hypothesized that the 1985 South African press curbs would result in a decrease in coverage of protest-related stories; a tapering off in the volume of coverage; and a decline in the prominence of the South Africa story relative to other newsworthy stories, but their study turned up no such effects. They also had predicted attentiveness among the general population in the United States to the South African problem and sympathy for the blacks in South Africa would decline. No such effects on U.S. public opinion were found.

Singer and Ludwig noted, however, that there was a decline in coverage levels in proportion to the amount of violence, assessed in terms

of the number of protest-related deaths, and speculated that if the restrictions had not been imposed, coverage might have kept pace with the violence, and attentiveness in the U.S. population might have increased between October 1985 and March 1986 instead of being at a plateau.

The Israeli government hoped the press curbs would lead to a decline in coverage of the conflict, which in turn would improve its image. In fact, research provides some evidence that such a strategy can be effective. Allbriton and Manheim (1985) demonstrated that reducing the volume of bad news about a country can improve its image as presented by the press. They examined the effectiveness of public relations interventions in enabling Third World nations to gain control of the flow of information from and about them and to successfully manipulate their image abroad. The researchers studied news coverage of five Third World countries with overwhelmingly negative images in the year preceding the public relations intervention and found that in every instance, at least one component of the client nation's news image improved during the year after signing its public relations contract, and in most cases the improvements were even more substantial. Allbriton and Manheim had hypothesized that, to better their images, the nations would seek to reduce their visibility, in terms of the amount of coverage they received, and improve their valence, or the balance of positive-negative coverage. They found that four of the five countries were successful in significantly reducing the amount of coverage they received, and for each country, the image valence changed in the predicted direction.

It is not by accident that the Israeli press sanctions, like those of South Africa, hit harder at television journalists than print journalists. Technological advances such as satellite news-gathering have changed the

face of television news, which increasingly relies on video footage to tell a story. Pictures impart added impact to stories.

Edwardson, Grooms and Proudlove (1981) found that viewers received greater information gain from news stories presented with interesting video than from news stories shown with a talking head -- even when the content of the video did not convey the facts of the story. Edwardson et al. concluded that the increased information gain occurred because the pictures stirred the viewers' curiosity and interest, causing them to pay more attention and to use the audio to explain the pictures. They concluded that interesting video is particularly beneficial to those who depend on television for the news. Davis and Robinson (1986) found that visual content of news items also strongly correlated with comprehension. Stories that contained large amounts of visual content or unique visual content appeared to be better comprehended. However, results also indicated that stories containing vivid and incongruent visuals interfered with comprehension of the verbal material. The findings of these studies offer insight into the effects of restricted news flow and can be integrated into a broader theory that can be applied to similar situations such as that unfolding now in Israel and the occupied territories.

HYPOTHESES OF RESTRICTED NEWS FLOW EFFECTS

Limiting journalists' access to covering conflict will reduce the amount of coverage in proportion to some measure of the level of conflict. Both the *Chicago Sun-Times* study and the

Singer and Ludwig study found that after the imposition of the press restrictions in South Africa, press coverage declined in proportion to the level of violence. Singer and Ludwig's failure to find a decline in the overall amount of coverage in the two months after the imposition of the press restrictions may not be telling -- a cutback in stories might not be felt for several months because journalists would initially compensate with extra effort to work around the restrictions any way possible. Eventually however, making the stories harder to get would have an effect because of the news organizations' limited manpower and time. Also, at first, the press restrictions themselves become a story, but as attention to the restrictions wanes, press attention to the country would decline.

The ban on cameras also would contribute to a reduction in television coverage because of television's heavy reliance on video footage. Forced to chose between two stories of equal merit, one with accompanying video and one without, most news directors would air the story accompanied by a videotape.

The restrictions will result in more stories presented by the anchor alone or just the anchor and a correspondent, with fewer sources being used and increased reliance on official accounts. Also, fewer stories will be accompanied by on-location video. Given the frame-construction, agenda-setting role of the media, it is reasonable to expect that the combination of an overall reduction in coverage and blander coverage would reduce the salience of the issue in the minds of the audience. The research of Edwardson, Grooms and Proudlove indicates that viewer recall of stories is significantly better for stories accompanied by video. It is logical that a person's recall is higher for the stories that they consider to be more

salient -- one would tend to keep in mind stories about issues or events one finds important or unusual. A gradual decline in issue salience would be expected. In addition to a simple reduction in video, one would expect that the press restrictions would affect the visual framing of the uprising through qualitative differences in video accompanying stories before and after the clampdown. With camera crews unable to get footage of violent confrontations after restrictions were imposed, the networks would be forced to use less dramatic, non-action video or to rely on stock footage that lacks immediacy. This would likely have the effect of leading viewers to believe the level of violence had diminished.

It is also reasonable to expect that over a long period of time, viewers' attitudes toward the country would be more positive because the flow of bad news has been reduced.

METHOD

To test the hypothesis that coverage, in proportion to the level of conflict, would be reduced in the wake of the press sanctions, all stories from December 1987 through June 1988 dealing with the intifada on the evening newscasts of the three major networks -- NBC, CBS and ABC -- were examined. December, the month the uprising began, was a logical starting point. The content analysis was carried out utilizing the newscast summaries contained in the Vanderbilt Television News Archive's *News Index and Abstracts.* [3] A number of news flow studies

[3] Seven months of coverage were examined because it was felt this would be a broad enough time span to allow for any lag in effects. Also, if just one or two months

have used the abstracts, rather than the audio or video tapes, because of financial and time restraints. Larson and Hardy (1977) established the reliability of the abstracts in a comparison between items coded from the abstracts and those same items coded from audio tapes, obtaining a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r < .99$.

Index citations listed under the subject heading "Palestine and Palestinian -- Unrest" were examined and coded. Entries under the subject headings "Israeli-occupied Territory -- Gaza Strip," "Israeli-occupied Territory - - West Bank" and "Peace Moves -- Shultz Plan" were cross-checked to ensure that all appropriate stories were included. Only stories directly linked to the uprising were included. For example, stories about PLO guerrilla attacks in Israel or more general stories about the PLO were excluded if they were presented as unrelated to the intifada. Similarly, stories dealing with Secretary of State Shultz's shuttle diplomacy promoting his peace plan in the Middle East were excluded if they seemed to focus only on the general topic of Mideast peace, but were included if taking steps to end the violence in the occupied territories was an integral part of the story.

To determine whether television and newspaper coverage was proportional to the amount of conflict, the number of protest-related deaths was compared to level of coverage. The death toll was tracked

---

before and after restrictions were examined, there would be a greater possibility that any changes found were caused by either normal cyclical fluctuations in the news coverage or by the presence or absence of external factors affecting the newsworthiness of the country. This seven-month cutoff was also governed by practical considerations -- the abstracts are published several months after the newscasts.

using *The New York Times* periodic accounts. [4] To test the second hypothesis, that coverage would become increasingly bland, the composition of the television reports was examined. The presentation format of the stories was coded as being either anchor only, the anchor plus outside sources (any non-network personnel appearing on-camera), the anchor plus one or more correspondents, or the anchor plus correspondent plus outside sources. In a further analysis of these outside sources utilized in two of the four presentation formats, the number of outside sources used in the report was counted, and they were sorted into the following categories: Israeli government, Israeli military, Palestinian spokesperson, Palestinian direct actor in the uprising (shooting and beating victims, rioters, deportees, arrestees, etc.), non-Palestinian Israeli direct actor in the uprising, medical personnel, general Palestinian, general non-Palestinian Israeli, U.S. official, others and can't tell. For complete descriptions of these categories, see Appendix B. To assess visual coverage, stories were coded as either containing video footage or not.

Although the primary focus of the study was television coverage, a content analysis of the *New York Times* over the same period was carried out for comparison. Thus it was possible to see if television coverage dropped proportionally more than newspaper coverage, as one would expect given television's reliance on pictures to present the story. Also,

---

[4] Using the newspaper stories to monitor the death toll, which was calculated month by month, presented some difficulties because the casualty figure was not included in stories on a daily basis; furthermore, some days there was no story. However, even if the death toll is viewed as an approximation, it was the best approximation available.

if televison coverage alone were examined, attributing any declines in coverage to the restrictions, rather than external factors, would be more difficult. In the *New York Times*, the number of stories dealing with Israel's problems in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were counted. The length of stories also was recorded to determine whether the restrictions led to shorter pieces and the number of stories accompanied by photos was counted to determine whether the visual coverage of the uprising in the print press changed after sanctions went into effect. The National Newspaper Index data base was utilized to generate descriptive information on all the *Times* stories dealing with the uprising. This made it possible to count the stories, record the number of column inches as a measure of story length, and note whether or not the story was accompanied by a photograph.[5]

The coding was done by the author. To check for coder reliability, another person -- a journalism graduate student -- was trained and given a random sample of 10 percent of all the television stories to code. Intercoder reliability was measured for all items involving any subjective decision-making. Using Holsti's formula, an intercoder reliability score on category assignments of .96 agreement, averaged across all categories, was obtained.

Determining whether there was a decline in how important the American public felt the Israeli-Palestinian problem to be presented some problems. The most relevant public opinion trend data came from a

---

[5]No tests of statistical significance were computed for the results of the content analysis. These would have been inappropriate because the study deals not with a sample, but with all intifada stories from the three major networks and the *Times*.

question asked in a series of national surveys conducted by the Daniel Yankelovich Group, *Americans Talk Security.* The question listed a number of foreign policy issues, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, and asked how serious a threat the conflict posed to U.S. national security interests over the next five years. Attitudes toward Israel were evaluated by looking at the results of other periodic public opinion polls. A computer search of the archives of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research was conducted to locate relevant surveys. A question posed in national surveys in January and April 1988 by Yankelovich-Clancy-Schulman for *Time* magazine queried respondents on whether they felt Israel was using an appropriate amount of force in quelling the uprising. Nearly identical questions in a February 1988 Gallup survey and a May 1988 CBS News/*New York Times* survey asked respondents if the Israelis were too harsh, too lenient or about right in their handling of the uprising.

RESULTS

As Table 1 shows, relative to the level of conflict, both television and newspaper coverage declined after the press restrictions went into effect. The level of conflict, as assessed by the mean number of deaths per month, increased by 12 percent. However, the mean number of television reports per month dropped by 27 percent, while the mean number of *Times* stories per month fell 21 percent. Similarly, the average length of television reports dropped 8 percent, and the average length of newspaper stories decreased 14 percent.

Some support also was found for Hypothesis 2 -- that the coverage would become blander after restrictions went into effect. As Table 2 shows, a smaller percentage of television reports contained videos in the post-restriction period. However, contrary to what the hypothesis would suggest, the percentage of television reports utilizing outside sources (those other than the anchor or correspondent) increased slightly. Even though more stories included outside sources, the mean number of outside sources used per report decreased by 14 percent.

As Table 3 shows, contrary to Hypothesis 2, the restrictions did not lead to increased reliance on official Israeli accounts. The proportion of total sources who were Israeli military personnel or Israeli officials stayed about the same after the restrictions. However, the coverage overall was less balanced after the restrictions. The proportion made up by general non-Palestinian Israelis climbed by nearly nine percentage points. The proportion of Palestinian spokespersons decreased about four percentage points. Summing across categories, Israelis accounted for just over one-third of all sources before the restrictions, but after the restrictions, Israelis accounted for nearly half of all sources. The proportion of Palestinian sources fell from 30 percent to 27 percent.

Table 4 shows the sharp decline in the percentage of stories using a Palestinian spokesman as a source, as well as the decrease in the percentage of reports with a Palestinian direct actor as a source. At the same time, the proportion of stories using a general non-Palestinian Israeli source increased by 13 percentage points. The proportion of stories using "other" sources -- which would include non-U.S. foreign government representatives, foreign political analysts and members of

international organizations such as human rights groups -- dropped by 15 percentage points.

To get an idea how coverage of similar events differed before and after the restrictions, we can compare the reports of the networks for specific incidents. On February 1, 1988, ABC devoted 1 minute, 10 seconds to reporting a confrontation between Israeli soldiers and rock-throwing Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip death of a Palestinian youth beaten by Israeli soldiers. Coverage included a report filed by a correspondent in Jerusalem and footage of the West Bank clash. NBC carried a 2-minute, 10-second story that included a segment filed by a correspondent in Tel Aviv. In the report, the mother of the victim was shown mourning in Gaza and was interviewed. Scenes were shown of the troubles in Jerusalem. Comments were also elicited from a member of a U.S. fact-finding delegation. CBS -- whose prime-time news show *48 Hours* was focusing on the Israeli troubles that week -- did not carry a story about the Israeli violence that night, but the next evening had an extensive 5-minute, 20-second story that included a report filed by a correspondent in the West Bank.

This can be compared with the coverage on May 1, 1988, of a similar story. ABC devoted just 20 seconds to reporting a West Bank clash between rock-throwing Palestinians and Israeli soldiers in which one Palestinian was fatally injured. The story was read by the anchor, with no report by a correspondent. No video footage was shown. CBS did not report the incident at all. NBC, which does not have a Sunday evening news show, did not focus on the incident in its story the following night.

Results of this study clearly show a decrease in coverage and changes in the characteristics of coverage in the wake of the press

sanctions. There is no evidence, however, that these changes affected Americans' assessment of the importance of the conflict. Table 5 shows, in fact, that between February and October 1988, the percentage of Americans who felt the Israeli-Arab conflict poses a serious threat to U.S. national security increased.

However, at the same time, Americans became more favorable toward Israel's handling of the uprising. As the survey results at the top of Table 6 indicate, the proportion of those polled who thought Israel was using too much force dropped by five percentage points from January to April 1988, while the proportion of respondents who thought Israel was not using enough force increased by seven percentage points. The same shift in opinion toward Israel can be seen in the results of pre- and post-restriction opinion surveys presented in the bottom half of Table 6: the proportion of those surveyed who felt that Israel's handling of the riots had been too harsh fell by nine percentage points between February and May 1988, while the proportion who felt that Israel's handling was too lenient increased by five percentage points.[6]

[6] The results presented in the bottom part of Table 6 came from surveys conducted by two different organizations that asked the question in a nearly identical way, but the responses may have been affected in some way by the wording. Survey researchers Bradburn and Sudman (1988) observe that even subtle differences in question wording can influence responses, and thus can be considered sources of non-sampling error. They also point out that there can be different types of order effects -- responses to a question can be conditioned by the prior questions that were asked or responses can be affected by the ordering of the response categories. Whether or not an explicit "don't know" or "no opinion" category is offered can also influence poll results.

CONCLUSIONS

This study offers striking evidence that governments beset by internal strife can effectively use press sanctions to reduce the flow of bad news, and ultimately, to sway foreign public opinion. Israel, like South Africa before it, hampered the press enough to cause a decline in coverage. Furthermore, the coverage became blander and less balanced. Although the percentage of stories using video footage declined only slightly, a lack of dramatic video probably played a big role in the decrease in coverage. A much bigger drop in the percentage of *Times* stories with photos after the restrictions is not surprising because the print media would be less inclined to kill a story just because no picture was available.

An alternate explanation for the reduction of coverage -- that the media just got tired of the story or, phrased another way, turned their attention to more pressing foreign news -- must be rejected for several reasons. First of all, the level of conflict increased in the months after the press restrictions; therefore, all things being equal, traditional news values would lead one to expect an increase in coverage. In addition, the media are unlikely to lose interest in the story because there are many American Jews, not to mention Arab Americans, and because Israel receives a great deal of U.S. military aid, which further stimulates attention to Israeli affairs. As coverage of the Palestinian uprising waned in the spring of 1988, what foreign news events received prominent coverage? The networks turned their spotlights on the turmoil in Panama resulting from strongman Manuel Noriega's links to drug smuggling and refusal to step down, plans for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan,

ethnic unrest in the Soviet Union, the Reagan-Gorbachev Moscow summit and the coup in Haiti.

The press is not blind to changes in coverage. In a story marking the one-year anniversary of the uprising, *The New York Times* noted December 9 that the press hardly covers "routine" incidents anymore and provides detailed coverage only if something particularly unusual or dramatic takes place. "And without frequent attention from the press," the *Times* correspondent wrote, "the uprising no longer seems to attract steady interest from the rest of the world." [7]

The success of South Africa and Israel likely will lead to an increase in such tactics in the future unless the news media can find ways to keep coverage proportional to some measure of reality. Furthermore, the media must be careful to keep reporting balanced. The restrictions certainly make the job of the journalist tougher, but the major news organizations have both the know-how and the resources to resist being compromised by press sanctions.

While this study shows that a nation such as Israel, which generally has been favorably regarded by Americans, can successfully use press curbs to halt or reverse any shift of U.S. attitudes toward increased negativity, this is probably not true for nations that are generally regarded in unfavorable terms. In the case of "friendly" nations, in the absence of repeated, concrete evidence of wrongdoing through press reminders, people probably over time revert to broader, long-held attitudes about the countries. But for the "unfriendly" nations, a reversion to the long-held attitudes would not be beneficial because the attitudes

[7]Brinkley, Joel. "After Year, Palestinians Call Uprising Stagnant," *The New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1988, p. 11.

are initially negative. In fact, the traditionally unfriendly nation would likely need substantial press coverage indicating an improvement in that country's situation before foreign public opinion would shift in the positive direction. An example of this is the shift in American and European attitudes about the Soviet Union in the *glasnost* era. With a now less-fettered press hammering away every day about how much better things are becoming in the Soviet Union, the tide of world public opinion has begun to swing dramatically. Without expansive press coverage, the mistrust with which outsiders have long viewed the Soviet Union might have remained entrenched, no matter what changes Gorbachev was bringing internally.

In evaluating such shifts in public opinion as we have seen on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, factors other than the press restrictions must be considered. Major developments would likely affect public opinion. For example, the PLO's overtures toward recognition of Israel, declaration of a Palestinian state and renunciation of terrorism in November 1988 could have a profound long-term impact on U.S. attitudes by providing the Palestinian movement with a degree of legitimacy that it has lacked thus far in the minds of most Americans. Such a development, by dramatically altering the image of the Palestinians, might override any effects on public opinion caused by the press restrictions. Clearly, more research is needed to understand the link between press restrictions and changes in foreign public opinion.

Table 1. Effect of Press Restrictions on Quantity of Coverage

	Before Restrictions	After Restrictions	Percent Change
No. of TV reports per month	60	44	-27
No. of *Times* stories per month	47	37	-21
Length of TV reports in minutes	2.4	2.2	-8
Length of *Times* stories in column inches	17.9	15.4	-14
Level of conflict			
No. of deaths per month	25	28	+12

Table 2. Effect of Press Restrictions on Characteristics of Coverage

	Before Restrictions	After Restrictions	Percent Change
Proportion of TV reports with video	86.7	81.1	-6
Proportion of *Times* stories with photo	51.4	41.5	-19
Proportion of TV reports presented by anchor only	23.3	22.9	-2
Proportion of TV reports presented by anchor and correspondent	8.3	6.9	-17
Proportion of TV reports with outside sources	68.3	70.3	+3
Average number of outside sources per report	2.2	1.9	-14

Table 3. Effect of Press Restrictions on Composition of Total TV Report Sources

	Pct. Before Restrictions (n=388)	Pct. After Restrictions (n=332)	Percentage Difference
Israeli official	20.4	20.5	+0.1
Israeli military	7.0	8.1	+1.1
Palestinian spokesman	12.4	8.1	-4.3
Palestinian Direct Actor in Uprising	3.1	1.8	-1.3
Israeli Direct Actor In Uprising	0.8	2.1	+1.3
Medical Personnel	0.3	1.5	+1.2
Palestinian (general)	14.4	16.9	+2.5
Israeli (general)	7.5	16.3	+8.8
U.S. official	9.3	9.6	+0.3
Other	18.6	8.1	-10.5
Can't Tell	6.4	6.9	+0.5
	100.2	99.9	

Table 4. Effect of Press Restrictions on TV Report Source Utilization

	% Stories Using Source Before Restrictions	% Stories Using Source After Restrictions	Percentage Difference
Israeli official	32.2	28.6	-3.6
Israeli military	11.7	13.1	+1.4
Palestinian spokesman	22.8	13.1	-9.7
Palestinian Direct Actor in Uprising	6.1	3.4	-2.7
Israeli Direct Actor In Uprising	0.6	3.4	+2.8
Medical Personnel	1.7	1.7	0.0
Palestinian (general)	22.2	22.3	+0.1
Israeli (general)	8.9	22.9	+13.0
U.S. official	16.1	13.7	-2.4
Other	25.0	9.7	-15.3
Can't Tell	11.1	10.3	-0.8

Table 5. How Serious A Threat Americans Feel the Israeli-Arab Conflict Poses to U.S. National Security Interests*

	February 1988 (n=1004)	October 1988 (n=1008)
	%	%
Extremely serious	16	24
Very serious	34	34
Somewhat serious	33	29
Not very serious	13	8
Not sure	4	6
	100	100

$x^2=74.08$ df=4
$p < .001$.

*The exact question wording was: I'm going to read a list of several foreign policy issues and developments. Thinking about the next five years or so, please tell me whether you feel each issue I mention poses an extremely serious, very serious, somewhat serious or not very serious threat to our country's national security interests. Remember, I'm not asking how important the issue is, but how serious a threat it is to our national security. . .The Arab-Israeli conflict. . .

These poll results were taken from the *Americans Talk Security* series of national surveys by the Daniel Yankelovich Group.

Table 6. American Attitudes Toward Israel's Handling of the Uprising

	January 1988 (n=1075)	April 1988 (n=1804)
	%	%
Israeli is using too much force	50	45
Israel is using right amount of force	23	13
Israel is not using enough force	6	13
Not sure	21	29
	100	100

x^2=160.63 df=3 p < .001.

The above information, from Yankelovich-Clancy-Schulman surveys done for *Time* magazine, was taken from archives of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Question identification codes are USYANKCS.011488.R02 and USYANKCS.884711.Q03A. The exact question wording was: In your view, are Israeli soldiers using too much force or about the right amount of force in responding to the protests of Palestinians living on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? The question was directed to a subpopulation (72%) of a larger sample that had heard/read about unrest in Israel.

	February 1988* (n=613)		May 1988** (n=1382)
	%		%
Israel's handling of riots has been too harsh	43		34
Israel's handling of riots has been about right	32		10
Israel's handling of riots has been too lenient	17		22
No opinion	8	Don't Know/ No answer	34
	100		100

x^2=1029.85 df=3 p < .001.

*These Gallup survey results were accessed through archives of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Question identification code is USGALLUP.021488.R1. The exact question wording was: Some people feel Israel has been too harsh in dealing with the Palestinian riots. Others feel Israel has used only enough force to prevent further rioting. Which comes closest to your own point of view -- that Israeli handling of the riots has been too harsh, too lenient, or about right?

**These CBS News/*New York Times* survey results were accessed through archives of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Question identification code is USCBSNYT.88MAY.R12. The exact question wording was: What do you think about the way Israel is handling the current Palestinian protests on the West Bank? Is Israel too harsh, too lenient or is Israel handling the protests about right?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albritton, Robert B. and Jarol B. Manheim. 1985. Public Relations Efforts for the Third World: Images in the News. *Journal of Communication* (Winter), pp. 43-59.

Brinkley, Joel. 1988. After Year, Palestinians Call Uprising Stagnant. *The New York Times* (Dec. 9), p. 11.

Cohen, Bernard C. 1963. *The Press and Foreign Policy.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Cowell, Alan. 1988. Army Roadblocks Curb Coverage of West Bank. *The New York Times* (March 5), p. 5.

Crackdown on Coverage Ordered. 1985. *The NEWS Media & The Law* (Fall/Winter), pp. 30-31.

Edwardson, Mickie, Donald Grooms and Susanne Proudlove. 1981. Television News Information Gain from Interesting Video vs. Talking Heads. *Journal of Broadcasting* (Winter), pp. 15-24.

Fitzgerald, Mark. 1985. Survey: South Africa's Restrictions Result in Less U.S. Coverage. *Editor & Publisher* (Dec. 28), p. 13.

Israel Clamps Down on Journalists in Occupied Lands. 1988. *The* (Raleigh, N.C.) *News and Observer* (March 20), p. 3A.

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. 1987. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Jennings, Peter. 1987. The 1986 Joe Alex Morris Jr. Memorial Lecture. *Nieman Reports* (Summer), pp. 4-9.

Larson, James and Andy Hardy. 1977. International Affairs Coverage on Network Television News: A Study of News Flow. *Gazette* (Vol. 23, No. 4), pp. 241-256.

Matabane, Paula W., Oscar Gandy and John Onachonu. 1986. *Understanding Social Conflict: Media Reliance and Student Perspectives on the Struggle in South Africa.* Unpublished paper presented at annual meeting of International Communications Association in Chicago, May 27-29, 1986.

McNelly, John T. and Fausto Izcaray. 1986. International News Exposure and Images of Nations. *Journalism Quarterly* (Autumn), pp. 546-553.

Press Blackout in South Africa. 1985. *Editor & Publisher* (Nov. 9), pp. 17, 36.

Robinson, John P. and Mark R. Levy. 1986. *The Main Source: Learning From Television News.* Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc.

Singer, Eleanor and Jacob Ludwig. 1987. South Africa's Press Restrictions: Effects on Press Coverage and Public Opinion Toward South Africa. *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Fall), pp. 315-334.

South Africa and News Censorship. 1987. *Nieman Reports* (Autumn), pp. 24-30, 55.

South Africa Institutes Censorship. 1985. *Broadcasting* (Nov. 11), pp. 91-92.

APPENDIX A:

Coding Sheet/ TV Coverage of Palestinian Uprisings

COL.

Date:

(1-6) ___ ___ (Mo.) ___ ___ (Day) ___ ___ (Yr.)

Network:

(7) ___ 1=CBS 2=ABC 3=NBC

Length of report:

(8-11) ___ ___(Min.) ___ ___(Sec.)

How was report presented?

(12) ___ 1=Anchor only 2=anchor + correspondent
3=anchor + other sources
4=anchor + correspondent + other sources

If other sources, what type: (enter no. of each type)

(13) ___ Israeli official
(14) ___ Israeli military
(15) ___ Palestinian spokesperson
(16) ___ Palestinian direct actor in uprisings
(17) ___ non-Palestinian direct actor in uprisings
(18) ___ medical personnel and bystanders
(19) ___ Palestinian (general)
(20) ___ non-Palestinian Israelis (general)
(21) ___ U.S. official
(22) ___ other
(23) ___ can't tell

Was story accompanied by video?

(24) ___ (1=yes, 2=no)

APPENDIX B:
Definition of Source Categories

Israeli official -- This is for all national and municipal government officials and parliamentarians, even if Palestinian -- the reasoning being that they are part of the system. Political party representatives and officials are also in this category. Ex-officials are included also, if described as such.

Israeli military -- This category includes all military and police personnel. Ex-military officers are also coded in this category if used as a source in that context.

Palestinian spokesperson -- This is harder to define because of the lack of a clear organization, other than the PLO, in representing the Palestinian people. The criterion here is if someone appears to be a leader of some key organization or even an activist whose press exposure gives him or her a broader voice. For example, some Palestinian lawyers, journalists and educators often fill the role of spokespersons in the absence of an official structure.

Palestinian direct actor in uprisings -- All rioters and participants in clashes against the Israelis are included in this category, as are deportees and arrestees. Palestinians injured in clashes are included, even if bystanders. Demonstrators are included, as are participants in other forms of non-violent protest, such as shop owners who closed in defiance of the law. Israeli Arabs who otherwise meet the criteria of this category are included.

non-Palestinian direct actor in uprisings -- This category is for Jewish settlers involved in clashes with Palestinians or Israeli soldiers. Settlers demonstrating against the government would be included also. This does not include Israeli peace activists demonstrating against the government policies.

medical personnel -- Doctors, emergency medical workers, nurses, etc. are put in this category.

Palestinian (general) -- This category is for sources such as friends

and relatives of direct actors who are quoted and for sources that are just people off the street called upon to voice an opinion. All persons identified as Palestinians who don't fit in either of the above two categories would fall into this one. Israeli Arabs may also be included in this category.

non-Palestinian Israelis (general) -- This umbrella category will include Israelis who do not fall into one of the preceeding categories; in particular persons on the street who are called upon to voice their opinion and friends and relatives of non-Palestinian direct actors who are quoted.

U.S. official -- All American government personnel who are quoted fall into this category; i.e., the president, cabinet members, congressmen, embassy officials, etc.

other -- A broad spectrum of sources fall into this category, including foreign government representatives (other than U.S.), foreign political analysts, members of international organizations, human rights spokesmen, etc.

can't tell -- This category is used only when there is doubt about which of the previous categories applies.